

EDUCATION FOR A LIFETIME



"creating a Commonwealth of Opportunity for all"

Mark R Warner

Overview

The fiscal health and economic viability of Virginia has been Governor Mark Warner's highest priority since taking office. Educational excellence lies at the heart of Virginia's prosperity.

For that prosperity to continue, parents, teachers and community groups must demonstrate an unyielding commitment to support local schools. Government must match that commitment.

Numerous state studies in recent years have concluded that Virginia is not meeting its commitment to fund an adequate education for Virginia's students. The Governor will ensure that his budget for the next biennium includes full funding for the Board of Education's projection for the current Standards of Quality, which is now estimated to be \$525 million greater than we are currently spending. Furthermore, his budget will put Virginia on a path to funding the revisions to the Standards of Quality recently proposed by the Board and will put Virginia on a path to addressing the documented needs of our nationally-acclaimed colleges and universities.

But, even without substantial new funds, we can implement targeted, innovative reforms to improve our schools. We know that for children to reach their full potential, they must enter school healthy and ready to learn. We know that we must attract and retain excellent teachers, and we know we must do a better job of preparing young adults for either the job market or higher education.

Governor Warner's efforts to achieve excellence in our educational system will not be confined to

kindergarten through high school. Virginia's colleges and universities face the challenge of educating more than 60,000 new students during this decade, and the Governor firmly believes we must make new investments in basic and applied research in order to attract new industries to the Commonwealth. Furthermore, recognizing that the typical worker in the 21st century will likely change jobs 10 to 12 times over the course of a career, schools must equip Virginians for change and help them upgrade their skills through life.

The Governor's Education for a Lifetime Initiative is designed to achieve these goals and to help us build a Commonwealth of Opportunity for all Virginians. Details of the Initiative will be released in September and October, but the Initiative contains the following broad elements:

- **Higher Quality Child Care.** To help ensure that every child enters school ready to learn, the Initiative will strengthen early childhood education and child care programs in Virginia.

(continued on the next page)

Education for a Lifetime

- **A Renewed Commitment to Accountability.**

To verify that our tax dollars are being spent wisely, the Governor's Initiative will establish a program to conduct efficiency reviews in individual school divisions. And, in order to ensure that standards-based education continues to raise student achievement, the Education for a Lifetime Initiative will further develop the nationally-recognized PASS program and expand Project Graduation, which will help seniors in high school meet the more stringent graduation requirements which begin to take effect this school year.

- **Senior Year Reform.** The Education for a Lifetime Initiative will offer rising seniors the opportunity to obtain a semester's worth of college credit by the end of their senior year. Alternatively, seniors will be able to work towards an industry certification starting in their senior year and continuing after high school graduation, culminating in a high school diploma plus an industry certification.

- **Improved Teacher Recruitment and Retention.** The Education for a Lifetime program will establish and fund substantive mentoring programs for new teachers in hard-to-staff schools and train and deploy "Turn-Around Specialists" to work in low-performing schools in Virginia.

- **Increased Economic Development Through Higher Education.** To help achieve greater economic benefits from our system of higher education, the Education for a Lifetime Initiative will provide incentives for colleges to graduate more students (thereby increasing earning power) and to increase the amount of cutting edge research conducted at our state's public universities and colleges.

- **Improved Workforce Development.** The Governor's Initiative will improve service delivery by streamlining existing programs and eliminating overlapping and redundant training programs.

#